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1. INTRODUCTION TO *RATIONALITY AS VIRTUE*

Throughout the modern period, one of the most controversial philosophical questions has focused on the nature and entailments of human rationality. This question relates to many others about the locus of the ‘objectivity’ of human knowledge, that is, about how ordinary beliefs are justified. The view is fairly widely established according to which many distinctly modern conceptions of human rationality pose considerable challenges when it comes to confirming the rationality of faith.ⁱ

In response to this threat, theologians and philosophers of religion have tended to employ one of two main strategies for bolstering the contention that faith is rational.ⁱⁱ The first, defensive, approach involves responding to objections to the faith that have been presented by outsiders on any number of grounds: historical, scientific, intellectual, and even moral.ⁱⁱⁱ The second approach goes on the offensive for the faith. In other words, it endeavors to give a positive account of Christian belief, which anticipates and implicitly overturns the accusations of objectors.

Although both of the two aforementioned strategies are essential to the overarching apologetic task, the persuasiveness of the defensive arguments turns on the integrity of the positive account of the faith, which those arguments defend. Without that preemptive account as a basis, defensive arguments inevitably tend to address objections on the implicit assumption that the objections are legitimate, thus exposing faith to even more and more devastating critiques.

The present work will contribute to the positive dimension of the apologetic project by delineating a definition of human rationality, which underlines the rationality of faith, where prevailing definitions evidently call it into doubt. As part of this effort, rationality will be described not merely as an epistemological matter to do with the soundness of human thinking. Ultimately, it will be construed as an ethical question whether knowledge is utilized in a manner that is consistent with the overarching purpose of ‘rational animals’, which is to flourish through the exercise of individual abilities and thereby contribute to the flourishing of others. In this regard, the argument outlined here might be described as a moral argument for God’s existence, though it is in many respects distinct from and involves a good deal more than most such arguments, which is arguably essential to their sustainability.^{iv}

In ways on which I will soon elaborate, defining rationality in ethical terms, more specifically, in terms of moral virtue, provides an exceptionally effective basis for establishing the rationality of faith. For Christian faith can be shown to enact or provide a rationale for rationality, defined in these terms, such that faith is already rational—and philosophy already theological. As I will demonstrate below, it takes a full-scale re-configuration of philosophy in terms of what I call ‘pro-theology philosophy’ to obtain a definition of rationality that is both amenable to faith and intrinsically more plausible than the definitions that tend to undermine faith.

By shedding new light through such arguments on the sense in which faith is intrinsically rational, the project undertaken here aims to lay the foundation not only for defensive apologetic projects but above all for inquiries concerning what it means to live by faith and elucidate the articles of faith—proper to the fields of Christian Ethics and Systematic Theology, respectively—which proceed on the assumption that faith is rational.

Before outlining the more detailed steps of the argument, however, a brief word about sources is in order. In preparing this proposal, I have drawn considerable inspiration from numerous pre-modern thinkers, above all, Thomas Aquinas. Because

Aquinas for one seems to operate from a theological and philosophical perspective, which does not even give rise to the problem of faith's rationality, at least in its modern form, his work represents an especially useful resource for overcoming this problem, which urgently demands resolution today.^v

Although I follow Aquinas closely on certain matters, the very fact that he operated in a context that is so far removed from our own renders it impossible or at least unprofitable simply to re-iterate his thought on, say, the nature of reason or of faith. Thus, the conceptual framework outlined in this context does not entail a reformulation or even interpretation of Aquinas but a constructive effort to resolve the current question of faith's rationality, which appropriates, sometimes quite extensively, and adapts, sometimes quite heavily, principles Aquinas articulated, insofar as these are still relevant in contemporary circumstances.^{vi}

As hinted above, my treatment of this framework falls into two distinct parts, one of which re-defines rationality in ethical terms through the articulation of a 'pro-theology philosophy', and another, which explains how rationality so construed gestures towards the rationality of Christian faith, such that a pro-theology philosophy turns out to be a theological philosophy.

While the present work undertakes the first part of the project, the second will be the focus of a separate work entitled, *Theological Philosophy*. Because the two distinct works are closely related, I will endeavor in what follows to sketch the overarching line of argument they delineate, by summarizing the discussion of each book's chapters. First, however, I will situate this argument in its intellectual context, describing some of the main approaches to asserting faith's rationality that have been advocated in modern times.

The Intellectual Context of Theological Philosophy

Throughout the modern period, two main methods of dealing with the problem of establishing faith's rationality have predominated, namely, rationalism and fideism. The rationalist approach, commonly espoused by proponents of natural theology, turns on several different types of attempt to establish God's existence on grounds accessible to human beings. While cosmological arguments appeal to nature to infer the reality of a cause or creator of the world, for example, teleological arguments invoke the order of the universe and signs of intelligent design to establish God's existence.^{vii}

In addition to these two types of argument, some, though admittedly fewer, have advocated an ontological argument for God's existence, that is, an argument that derives proof for God from the very definition of God and thus from the mere thought of him, working from 'reason alone' as opposed to invoking the quasi-empirical evidence of creation or the natural order.^{viii} By contrast to rationalism, fideism tends to trade on the assertion that faith cannot be evidenced or grounded by reason in any way but ought to be adhered to all the same.^{ix}

In recent years, many scholars have begun to recognize that neither approach to addressing the question of faith's rationality is entirely adequate to the task. While fideism simply evades the question, for example, the natural theological proofs for God's existence mentioned above seem ultimately to beg the question they purport to answer, or to assume what they attempt to prove. They do this by taking God's existence as evident to the senses or self-evident to the mind, when clearly God's reality is not evident in these ways to those who deny or disregard it. As numerous critics have noted, such proofs usually only have the power to persuade those who

already believe in God.^x At very least, this suggests that they do not suffice as a main line of defensive argument for the existence of God.

That is not to say that the proofs have no place in Christian thought, however. Indeed, they may enrich the faith of believers or even bring unbelievers to faith, particularly when employed as tools for forming a habit of viewing the world from the perspective of belief in God. As I have argued elsewhere, this perspective checks the human tendency to ascribe absolute significance to things other than God and so transforms the thoughts and lives of believers into evidence for the difference belief in God can make when it comes to dealing with ordinary affairs.^{xi}

Though such a therapeutic or pedagogical interpretation of the theistic proofs is arguably more faithful to the intents of the early Christian and medieval writers who originally developed them, it admittedly diverges rather widely from the modern conception of the arguments, according to which theistic proofs offer direct evidence for God's existence. In fact, it already moves in the general direction of the new approach to asserting faith's rationality that this book contributes to developing.

In presenting a new way of conceiving faith's rationality, however, the present work is not alone. Recently, a number of other scholars have sought to re-think the whole project of proving faith's rationality, in some cases by going so far as to challenge the prevailing standards of rationality that pose problems for faith. For instance, proponents of Reformed Epistemology (RE)—including Nicholas Wolterstorff, William Alston, and especially Alvin Plantinga—ground their religious epistemological agenda on a preliminary reconsideration of the modern 'evidentialist' or 'foundationalist' standard of knowledge. According to this standard, knowledge claims must be backed by empirical evidence, such that cosmological and teleological proofs provide the sole means to proving the existence of God.^{xii}

In challenging this standard, RE thinkers, particularly Plantinga, appeal to a revised version of the ontological argument in order to argue that belief in God is 'properly basic'. That is to say, God is intuitively and thus ineluctably known, at least to those with the will or desire for God that is generated by God's own irresistible grace. By construing belief in God as properly basic, RE thinkers effectively reverse the question whether it is rational to believe in God. In diverse and highly sophisticated ways to which this brief description obviously cannot do full justice, they seek to render it inconceivable not to know that God exists.

Although the work of RE scholars represents a remarkable advance in the field of religious epistemology, it has met nevertheless with various forms of criticism. One of the main lines of contention against proponents of RE is that their approach seems suspiciously similar to that of fideism, in that it advocates a sort of groundless ground for belief in God, to wit, a properly basic intuition.^{xiii} Though RE thinkers themselves have sought ways to exonerate their program of this charge, another has been raised, which points out that the RE agenda, if successful, still only establishes that there is something like a God, not necessarily the Christian God in whom RE figures themselves believe.^{xiv}

A similar charge could incidentally be laid before the natural theologians who advocate the other forms of proof for the existence of God mentioned above. While cosmological and teleological proofs may validly demonstrate the existence of something like a God, they provide no basis for confirming that this God is the Christian God or that of any other religious system. Thus, the question remains how conceptually to connect theistic proofs of any kind—whether natural theological or Reformed Epistemological—with belief in, say, the Triune, Incarnate God of Christian faith, as opposed to appending the articles associated with specifically

Christian belief at the end of a line of argument for God's existence.

In order to compensate for the lack of doctrinal content inherent in theistic proofs, certain analytic philosophers with Christian persuasions have recently developed a program they call 'analytic theology', which endeavors to apply the tools and methods of analytic philosophy to elucidating the coherence and rationality of theological doctrines.^{xv} In principle, this is a commendable project to which this work and its sequel might be seen as contributing, depending on exactly how philosophy is used to illuminate the sense in which Christian doctrines are rational, and indeed, how the terms 'philosophy', 'rationality', and 'doctrine', are even defined.

While analytic theologians may eventually succeed in its undertaking, it arguably remains the case that their efforts would bring them no closer than analytic philosophers of religion to forging a connection between beliefs about the Christian God and the object of attempts to establish the rationality of belief in a God of any kind. Thus, it would still be necessary for them to append their accounts of the intelligibility of Christian doctrinal statements to theistic proofs in a seemingly arbitrary way in order to establish that it is the God of Christian belief whose existence is under consideration. By contrast, the connection between theistic proof and specifically Christian beliefs is integral to theological philosophy.

In addition to the accounts already mentioned, a number of other promising approaches to resolving the question of faith's rationality have been presented in recent years. One account, which is highly congenial to my own, is that of Denys Turner in his *Faith, Reason, and the Existence of God*. In this book, Turner contends that reason itself needs to be re-defined in terms that are more compatible with faith before the question of the rationality of faith can be resolved.

As Turner himself states, however, his essay only "clear[s] away a little of the clutter of misconception, philosophical and theological, which has for several centuries stood in the way of a more theologically positive understanding of reason."^{xvi} In doing this, however, he effectively calls for a more comprehensive effort to re-define reason in a manner that is amenable to faith, and to address the question of the rationality of faith on that basis, thus anticipating the project I undertake here.

According to another line of argument that has been advanced in recent years—by figures as diverse as the philosopher of religion Paul Moser and the Christian ethicist, Stanley Hauerwas—the proof for the rationality of faith in God ultimately derives from the Christian life, or from the life of the Church.^{xvii} While I certainly arrive at a similar conclusion in the last analysis—indeed in the last substantial chapter of this book's sequel—my own argument over the course of two books should serve to indicate that a good deal of preliminary philosophical and theological work needs to be conducted before this compelling conclusion can really hold up to scrutiny or even carry much meaning—whether for Christians or non-Christians—thus providing a fully intellectually satisfactory alternative to, say, natural theology.

This preliminary work would involve re-construing ordinary rationality in terms of a certain style of life—that is, a virtuous life—and showing subsequently that this life is paradigmatically instanced in or enabled by life in the Church. Such a line of reasoning alone seems plausibly to support the claim that the Christian life is the proof of faith's rationality. Yet it is just this line of thinking that is lacking in the work of the aforementioned thinkers and particularly that of Hauerwas, who seems to deny the very need for it.

By developing precisely this line of thinking, in contrast, theological

philosophy aims to provide a basis for the claim that the Christian life is the proof for faith's rationality. At the same time, it lays the foundation for the efforts of theological ethicists to articulate what the Christian life involves and the reasons for living it, without which the Christian life and Christian ethics might easily be perceived as arbitrary, irrational, or irrelevant to all but Christian believers.

Although I have acknowledged above the creativity and promise of a variety of accounts of faith's rationality, I have suggested nonetheless that much remains to be desired when it comes to affording resources conclusively to overturn the question whether it is reasonable to believe in the God of Christian faith.^{xviii} Of course, a single work like this one could scarcely overcome completely the skepticism about faith's rationality that has grown recent years. That would depend not only on the plausibility and persuasiveness of the work's argument but also on the will of skeptics to receive it. Nevertheless, the present discussion begins to forge a conceptual pathway past the problem of faith's rationality and on to a plane of systematic and moral theological inquiry, which presupposes it. In its way of doing this, as outlined below, therefore, it provides conceptual resources to those willing to employ them to make slow but steady progress towards the victory of faith over doubt.

The Precursor: Pro-Theology Philosophy

The effort the present work undertakes to outline a pro-theology philosophy begins in **chapter two** ('The Ontology of Participation') with a discussion of the sub-discipline of philosophy which deals with the most fundamental area of philosophical inquiry, namely, ontology, which describes 'what there is' and the way in which it exists. In particular, the chapter outlines an ontology of 'participation' such as can be found in various forms in the work of Thomas Aquinas and other pre-modern thinkers. As I understand it, 'participation' refers to a being's engagement in the activities or form of existence proper to its specific nature or essence, which is acquired at its inception. This essence makes the being one type of thing as opposed to another and provides it with a potential to actualize through ongoing participation in a certain mode of existence, or life.

Since the human essence is that of a rational animal—or embodied intellectual being—I further describe in this chapter the faculties of perception, imagination, and intellect, which allow human beings to actualize their cognitive nature. Subsequent to this discussion, I detail the three main areas in which human beings may have an aptitude or 'intellectual virtue' for exercising rationality. These areas include wisdom, which might be understood in terms of the study of theology and philosophy; science, which simply concerns the ordered study of any object of inquiry whatever; and skilled or craft knowledge, which includes all practical, productive, and creative arts.^{xix}

After treating the faculties that enable human beings to acquire knowledge, I turn in **chapter three** ('The Ontology of Knowledge') to articulate an ontology of knowledge, or an account of the elements or cognitive functions that factor into and facilitate the cognitive process. These include concepts, statements, and definitions, and inductive and deductive modes of reasoning. In this context, I also consider the relationship between language and knowledge, which allows me to account for the way and extent to which thought is inevitably shaped by and carried out within particular traditions or spatio-temporal contexts.

In the course of this discussion, I review the various aspects of the Aristotelian system of formal logic, which Aquinas implemented as a tool for the expression of his

own thought.^{xx} In doing so, however, it might be argued that I overlook the fact that traditional logic stemming from Aristotle's works has largely been replaced in contemporary philosophy by modern symbolic logic, especially the predicate calculus.^{xxi} The main difference between the two systems is this: while modern symbolic logic operates in an entirely hypothetical mode, "traditional logic makes the assumption that no term is empty."^{xxii} That is to say, it presumes that there are real instances of all the terms assessed. The advantage of the predicate calculus, many would assert, is that it allows deductions to be carried out independently of the meaning or content of the propositions involved, thus enabling distinctions to be articulated far more precisely than would be otherwise possible.

In an effort to affirm the fundamentality of modern symbolic logic, certain logicians have endeavored to show that the results of the theory of syllogism may be obtained in predicate calculus, provided certain existential assumptions are made.^{xxiii} By these means, they have tried to show that traditional logic is reducible to predicate calculus.^{xxiv} Rather than proving that there is a fundamental discrepancy between the two systems, however, this effort simply establishes that traditional logic is a sub-set of predicate calculus, insofar as it makes assumptions about reality, where predicate calculus is also concerned with empty and thus all conceivable terms.^{xxv}

Although predicate calculus may for this very reason successfully enable professional philosophers to explore hypothetical questions, its corresponding tendency to sever ties with reality renders it rather less suitable for the purposes of the present work. One of those purposes is to elucidate the sense in which logic serves as a training ground or facilitator for ordinary cognitive efforts that promote "reason's self-government, with respect to one's own practical choices and those of others."^{xxvi} In other words, the aim of this work is to explain logic in a way that illustrates that it ultimately "points beyond itself to a valuable ethical end."^{xxvii}

Aristotelian logic is highly compatible with this purpose, precisely because it deals primarily with actual realities, which are the concern of ordinary knowing agents. By clarifying some difficult aspects of Aristotle's logic, consequently, this chapter sets the stage for chapter four's effort to illustrate the vital role logic plays in the successful execution of the cognitive process. As I will show in later chapters, particularly chapter seven, this process through which reason properly governs its own operations in turn predisposes the mind effectively to govern the self and its relation to others and thus to tailor logic to larger ethical ends.

On the grounds that human knowledge like all things is subject to development, **chapter four** ('The Conditions for Knowledge') demonstrates how the ideas whereby humans realize their potential also undergo growth and change. As I will elaborate, the dialectical process of intellectual development, facilitated by the elements of logic, takes place in three stages, which I will treat in terms of expectant, fulfilled, and informed faith.

One of the main reasons why I appeal to the concept of faith, generically not religiously defined, to explain the process of development in knowledge is that it testifies to the fact that unknowing, the sub-conscious, or tacit knowledge fuels the knowing process.^{xxviii} On another level, the concept of faith bespeaks the goal-orientation of knowledge, or the fact that we do not start out knowing whatever we want to know but set objectives to know which we must strive gradually to fulfill over time on the belief that we will eventually do so.

In this connection, the first phase of expectant faith is characterized by a lack of knowledge and a desire to know that motivates us to undertake inquiries that are designed to bring about the acquisition of knowledge. That knowledge is achieved in

the second phase of fulfilled faith, while the third phase of informed faith involves placing confidence in the knowledge obtained in fulfilled faith in order to make sense of further experiences.^{xxix} In doing this, we not only add clarity and precision to that knowledge but also begin the whole process of moving from expectant to fulfilled to informed faith again, such that the search for truth is interminable, and knowledge never ceases to be a matter of faith.^{xxx}

Because our thinking is always caught in the throes of expectant, fulfilled, or informed faith, it is evidently impossible to capture thoughts about things that are true for all persons at all places and at all times, that is, to be objective or rational on one common modern definition of the term. Thus, **chapter five** ('Rationality') seeks to explain the sense in which human beings engaged in the cognitive process as I describe it may be considered rational. To this end, I follow Aquinas in appealing to the indispensable role the will plays in collaboration with the intellect at every one of the three aforementioned phases of inquiry. The work of this faculty is implied in the previous appeal to the concept of faith, which is suggestive of intellectual as well as volitional components of cognition, that is, both knowledge and the desire to pursue or employ knowledge.

In expectant faith, for example, the will to account for reality alerts us to the fact that there is something important in our experience for which we are unable to account, filling us with the desire and motivation to compensate for the deficiency in our understanding. Moreover, the will signals when we have achieved the understanding we desire, refusing to settle for any solution that fails to satisfy this desire. Finally, the will compels us to apply the understanding we have achieved in order to make sense of further experiences in informed faith. Without the will moving the intellect at all times, in summary, it would be impossible for the intellect to gain and grow in understanding.

In order to uphold the intellect's commitment to the truth, the will seemingly needs a means by which to make contact with the particular realities of experience for which the intellect is responsible to account. Aquinas explains the embodied nature of human knowing by appealing to the 'passions'. Whenever we experience our bodies or an object in the external world, the passions register the object of experience as helpful or inimical with respect to the intellect's purpose of knowing what is true and thereby help the will determine how to direct the intellect towards or away from that object.

As essential as the passions may be when it comes to helping us testify to the truth, they can also lead us astray from the truth when we fail to evaluate particular objects of knowledge in terms of the larger effort to promote the truth, and instead reduce the pursuit of truth to the promotion of one theory or ideology about which we are particularly passionate. When we become so preoccupied with one perspective, channeling all our passions to promote it, our passions become 'dis-passions'. For they prevent rather than enable the mind to remain receptive to the ongoing discovery of truth. They put us out of touch rather than in touch with reality, often leading us to fabricate, modify, or block out information to the end of bolstering personal opinions.

When explaining how to counteract the dis-passions, I appeal to Aquinas' famous discussion of the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, arguing that these can be construed not merely as moral but also as intellectual virtues that rectify the intellect, will, and passions for their purpose of pursuing the truth. In this regard, I seek to contribute to recent discussions of what is known as 'virtue epistemology', that is, the growing field of philosophical inquiry in which the success of knowledge is said to turn on various epistemic character

qualities such as commitment (i.e. fortitude) or a sense of accountability to the truth (i.e. justice).^{xxx}

In a virtue epistemology inspired by Aquinas, prudence for one can be described as the virtue that compels the intellect to seek contact with reality. On my account, it allows for this possibility because of the justice of the will, which motivates us to testify about reality in a way that does justice to it, inasmuch as it is accessible to our knowledge. As I understand it, the collaborative work of prudence and justice is sustained by the two further ‘virtues of the passions’, namely, fortitude and temperance, which can be counted amongst the intellectual virtues insofar as they promote the work of prudence and justice.

While fortitude plays its part in this regard by giving us the passion or strength to overcome challenges to prioritizing truth over personal opinions or agendas, temperance fills us with the passions we need to perform the regular work involved in pursuing truth, thus preventing us from indulging in passions for pursuits that would distract us from this endeavor. To sum up: fortitude and temperance make it possible to follow through on the purposes of prudence and justice by teaching us to have the courage and discipline to do exactly this.

As this confirms, the four intellectual virtues together—and only in that way—enable us truthfully to testify to our experiences. Although they do not allow us to meet the seemingly impossible standard of knowledge according to which our ideas must remain perennially true, they do predispose us to revise beliefs we originally took to be true whenever new experiences require that we do so. As I will show, these revisions are possible—and human beings are rational—because of the work not only of the intellect but also of the will and passions and the intellectual virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, which form them.

In advancing this argument about the indispensability of the intellect, will, and passions to human rationality, some readers might suspect that I endorse the so-called ‘faculty psychology’ that contemporary philosophers have found so objectionable, but which is common amongst pre-modern philosophers including Aquinas and before him, Plato and Aristotle. In the iconic critique of faculty psychology developed in *The Concept of Mind*, Gilbert Ryle contends that the traditional dogma “that the mind is in some important sense tripartite, that is, that there are just three ultimate classes of mental processes...namely, thought, feeling, and will,” represents “such a welter of confusions and false inferences that it is best to give up any attempt to re-fashion it. It should be treated as one of the curios of theory.”^{xxxii}

As a quasi-behaviorist, Ryle rejects such a faculty psychology on the grounds that it supposedly “assumes that there are mental states and processes enjoying one sort of existence and bodily states and processes enjoying another [such that] an occurrence on the one stage is never numerically identical with an occurrence on the other.”^{xxxiii} According to most versions of this myth of what Ryle calls “the Ghost in the Machine,”^{xxxiv} overt actions “are the results of counterpart hidden operations”^{xxxv} in the secret mental life of the knowing agent. For Ryle, in fact, appeals to the intellect, will, and emotions are the prime exemplification or ramification of the notion that the mental faculties lead a life of their own, over and above the human acts they affect. Thus, they reinforce the insurmountable mind-body dualism, which Ryle perceives as intrinsic to faculty psychology and as the most problematic feature thereof.

Since the time Ryle first mounted his critique of faculty psychology, numerous philosophers have responded to his arguments in ways that call attention to his fundamental misapprehension of the theory to which he so forcefully objected.^{xxxvi}

For example, David Braine has stressed that the mental states, such as thinking, willing, and feeling, which faculty psychologies postulate, are not real entities in the way Ryle seemingly envisaged them. Rather, they represent logical constructions or explanatory locutions, the purpose of which is simply to elucidate the psychological impetuses behind changes in behavior, without which there could arguably be no changes in behavior.^{xxxvii}

Assuming that “any proper account of the mental involves the physical, and any proper account of the physical involves the mental,”^{xxxviii} Braine concludes that all statements about human acts are or must be ‘hybrid’ statements that recognize both cognitive and behavioral components of human action.^{xxxix} Far from indicating the existence of three autonomous entities that function on a plane that supersedes that of natural life, his account consequently confirms, the language regarding intellect, will and passions of which faculty psychologists tend to avail themselves points up the constraints of language when it comes to giving an account of something as unified and fluid as embodied human action.

In employing this language, my own treatment of faculty psychology in chapter five operates on the assumption that appeals to the intellect, will, and passions serve collectively to explain the occurrence of embodied human acts—whether intellectual or moral. Rather than implying the existence of irreducibly distinct entities that operate over and above the embodied life of the human being on a separate, mental, plane of being, references to these faculties are intended to facilitate understanding of the conditions that give rise to human actions on the only plane of being in question, namely, that of natural life.

As argued in chapter two, the pursuit of knowledge by way of the three aforementioned faculties is our means as human beings to accomplishing the larger task of becoming what we are. On this basis, I argue in closing chapter five that our cognitive efforts are best undertaken with a view to the larger moral or personal goal of self-actualization. By situating our intellectual efforts within the context of this greater goal, I submit, we achieve the optimal position from which to utilize our knowledge for rational ends, namely, ones that are consistent with rather than inimical to our maximal moral or personal development as ‘rational animals’ with skills in the areas of wisdom, science, or art.

On the grounds that moral virtue is the final arbiter or paradigm case of intellectual virtue and thus of human rationality, the remaining chapters of this work explain how the four cardinal moral virtues enable us to become rational in the fullest sense of the term, by cultivating ‘an individual orientation towards the highest good’, which is the definition of the moral life, and therefore rationality.

As a preliminary to this discussion, I explore in **chapter six** (‘Deficient Conditions for Pro-Theology Philosophy’) certain factors that might prevent us from fully realizing our personal or moral potential. In this connection, I start by explaining that the dis-passions, which sometimes lead us astray in the pursuit of truth, are particularly liable to detract from our efforts when it comes to engaging in the moral task of self-actualization. They acquire the power thus to render us deficient for our human purpose when they lead us to believe that our good or happiness consists in goods that are inferior to that of self-actualization.

In cases where such ‘dispassionate’ tendencies become entrenched, they create fixed dispositions whereby we cultivate the worst rather than the best possible versions of ourselves, self-destructing rather than self-actualizing. These dispositions are what are called vices. In this chapter, I outline the implications of the seven main vices that are recognized in the pre-modern Christian tradition and the work of

Aquinas, drawing on these sources to construct an account of the way that pride, greed, envy, apathy, anger, lust, and gluttony unravel our ability to be and become what we are.

In treating these vices, I call attention to the two extreme forms in which each vice may express itself. For example, I show that pride not only manifests in an excessive form through arrogance or hubris; it can also emerge in a deficient form, namely, false humility. As I further demonstrate, greed may also surface in extremes of excess or deficiency, respectively, that is, in an unbridled lust for pleasure or privilege, or in a sort of ‘greed for pain’. Moreover, apathy may appear in the guise of sheer laziness or lack of ambition, or it may assume the form of extreme busyness and preoccupation with pointless activities.

On my argument, drawing attention to the excessive and deficient forms of every vice is absolutely vital to recognizing and thus correcting as opposed to exacerbating the vices individuals actually possess. Once this account of the vices is elaborated, it should become evident that we need to be informed about the fact that self-realization is our highest good, and about that in which self-actualization consists, if we are to avoid confusion on account of the passions regarding what it means for us to live good lives, and thus to escape the snare of the vices.

What it means to actualize personal potential, on my understanding, is quite simply to ‘bear well’ whatever our intellectual aptitudes, resources, and circumstances that are given to us to bear, at any given point in time. Since these may change over time and with experience, it follows that we must always remain open to reconsidering what it means for us to bear our lives well. By bearing ourselves well in the aforementioned respects, we not only realize who we are but also exploit our personal skills for the sake of contributing to the well being of others, or the common good, in our invariably individualized and finite ways.

On this showing, consequently, there is no dichotomy between the personal goal of striving for our own highest good, which consists in bearing our circumstances to the best of our abilities—thus engaging in self-actualization—and the aim of realizing our potential to promote the common good. The two goals of human and humane being represent two aspects of one phenomenon.^{x1} In closing on this note, I set the stage for the last major chapter of the book, which will cover how we bear our lives well by cultivating the four cardinal moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

As I explain in **chapter seven** (‘Sufficient Conditions for Pro-Theology Philosophy’), the four cardinal virtues operate in the moral context in ways that are recognizable from their work in the intellectual context. For instance, prudence puts us in touch with who we are as individuals, helping us accurately to assess our intellectual and other abilities, without over or under-estimating them, thus predisposing us to make the most of our limited lives, in part through the exercise of intellectual virtues. In general, then, prudence teaches us to ‘bear well’ whatever we may have to bear in terms of abilities, resources, and circumstances, and thus to strive for the highest good in the way we can from within the confines of our individual lives.

In co-operation with prudence, justice enables us to bear ourselves to the best of our abilities not only because this maximizes our existence and thus our experience of what it means to thrive in the human condition, but also because such self-actualizing efforts double as the actualization of our potential personally to contribute to the good of others, albeit in a limited way. While fortitude further affords the courage we need to fight for the highest or common good in the face of obstacles,

temperance disciplines us to carry out the daily responsibilities involved in bearing our lives well, when it is open to us to be distracted from or neglect these responsibilities. In their distinctive ways, consequently, the four cardinal virtues collectively enable us to maintain a personal commitment to the highest good, which ideally entails the exercise of the intellectual virtues as well.

In the final section of this chapter, I address a number of questions, which bear on the larger question regarding the sense in which moral virtue is the final arbiter of human rationality. For instance, I consider the extent to which we can be considered virtuous or rational while still in the process of habituating ourselves in virtue. Additionally, I inquire about the extent to which we can be regarded as rational if we possess only intellectual without moral virtue or moral without intellectual virtue.

Although I affirm that rationality is possible on some level under both circumstances, I conclude by building on the argument of chapter five, according to which rationality ideally entails both intellectual and moral virtue, offering reasons to support this contention. Where there is a unity of intellectual and moral virtue—or better, intellectual *for* moral virtue, and moral virtue conversely substantiated by intellectual virtue, in summary, I identify the paradigm case of human rationality.

In **chapter eight**, I briefly summarize the argument of the book and extrapolate some additional conclusions from it. In this connection, I show that the process of self-actualization described above doubles as a process of self-discovery, provided it is undertaken in a conscious or deliberate manner. Since all our labor to bear things well strengthens our sense of personal identity and purpose under these conditions, I elaborate, that work in turn facilitates further attempts to engage in self-actualization.

As this brief summary of the book's argument suggests, the effort to re-define rationality undertaken here involves a foray into all the main sub-disciplines of philosophy: ontology, theory of knowledge, and ethics. On the account I have advanced, these sub-disciplines, while distinctive, cannot be treated as altogether unrelated to one another, as they often are in contemporary philosophy, because they collectively describe and prescribe a functional and fulfilling—or rational—human life. While ontology and the theory of knowledge delineate the necessary conditions for that life and thus for pro-theology philosophy in that they respectively describe the way all things become themselves and the cognitive means through which human beings realize their potential, ethics satisfies the sufficient conditions by accounting for the way these necessary conditions are ultimately fulfilled in the lives of moral agents, or human beings.

There are at least two reasons why I call this philosophy whereby rationality is re-construed in terms of a personal commitment to the highest good a 'pro-theology philosophy', that is, a philosophy that by its very nature gestures towards the rationality of the claims of faith. One reason concerns the fact that the theory of knowledge proper to this philosophy presupposes and explains the vital role that faith plays in human reasoning. Although this faith is not specifically religious, the very fact that faith of any kind is indispensable to ordinary rationality already suggests that religious faith and even Christian faith may have a sort of rational substance that is often overlooked on prevailing conceptions of both reason and faith.

While the account of knowledge developed in this work may afford some initial and potentially fruitful grounds for asserting the rationality of Christian faith, I have suggested that there may be an even more powerful and conclusive approach to doing this, which involves showing how faith explains the possibility of maintaining the individual commitment to the highest good, or moral virtue, that I have described

as the final arbiter of human rationality.

In my proposal, in fact, an ‘ethical’ re-definition of rationality in terms of a personal commitment to the highest good ineluctably calls for a theological explanation as to how this commitment can be upheld. Thus, a pro-theology philosophy, fully enacted, is strictly speaking a theological philosophy. For this reason, I will proceed in the section below to illuminate pro-theology philosophy’s relation to theological philosophy by outlining my understanding of this final rendering of philosophy, which will be developed more extensively in a further volume.

Though the ultimate purpose of the present work is to lay the foundation for the elaboration of a theological philosophy, and thereby overturn the question whether faith is rational, I would close my account of pro-theology philosophy by emphasizing its potential uses for philosophers who are not concerned with this particular question. As the discussion thus far will have established, pro-theology philosophy potentially allows for the recovery of a now uncommon way of thinking about philosophy as a ‘way of life’^{xli}, namely, in accord with the highest good, which predominated in many ancient and medieval schools and recurs under various guises in a limited number of more recent schools of philosophical thought.^{xlii}

This way of thinking promises not only to render philosophy more accessible to ordinary people but by the same token to provide them with resources urgently needed in today’s world for living good and meaningful lives. That aside, the attempt I will make to show how emphases on logic and the soundness of arguments fit within a larger framework for addressing moral, personal, or one might say existential questions about philosophy as a ‘way of life’ also holds promise in terms of reconciling analytic and Continental approaches to philosophy, which are often at odds with one another on account of a tendency to perceive these concerns as mutually exclusive. By reconciling those concerns under the auspices of pro-theology philosophy, I not only lay the groundwork for alleviating the problem of the rationality of faith but also potentially for innovations in philosophical methodology.

The Project: Theological Philosophy

The first substantial chapter of *Theological Philosophy* (‘Necessary Conditions for Theological Philosophy’) picks up where pro-theology philosophy leaves off, arguing that belief in the God of Christian faith—a God whose nature and work are treated by Christian theology—provides an explanation or rationale for moral virtue or human rationality, and is rational in that sense. Such an explanation is arguably necessary on account of the human tendency to reduce the highest good of ‘bearing things well’ or self-actualization to lesser goods—like the promotion of a specific cause or institution, the pursuit of knowledge, wealth, fame, pleasure, family, friends, or honor, to name a few—or even to ‘goods’ that may not be good at all.

To make this reduction is ironically to exchange an ability to utilize our lives and resources in ways that promote our own flourishing and that of others for one of using other persons, objects, and circumstances to the end of reinforcing self-serving interests, and ultimately, a prideful perspective on the self. It is to undermine rather than support the highest good and therefore compromise rationality. In order to obtain a rationale for refusing to jeopardize our rationality along these lines, therefore, it seems necessary to posit the reality of one ultimate good that cannot be reduced to any finite good: a single highest good that is transcendent, even divine.^{xliii}

Though such an affirmation of divine unity or simplicity, such as can be found in the work of Aquinas to say nothing of other monotheists, suffices in many respects as a rationale for rationality, there is a level on which an account of the reality of a single transcendent being necessitates an appeal to a Trinity of divine persons, namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. An analogy derived from human knowing, or better, self-knowing—which presupposes the knower, the object known, which is the self, and the will or desire to know the object known—illustrates why this is so.

Where this analogy is invoked, the Father may be regarded as the first knower who knows the Son in the way one would know oneself. Since the Father's knowledge on this understanding is reflexive—it is self-knowledge—the Son in turn can be said to know the Father. Thus, the Father's knowing of the Son and the Son's knowing of the Father reflect their mutual desire to know one another, that is, God's desire to know himself and make himself known as the highest good that he is, which is encapsulated by the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

From this analogy, it follows that the doctrine of God as Father, Son, and Spirit is essential to accounting for one God who is capable of knowing and communicating himself as God and of willing to do precisely this. Since a God incapable in these respects could scarcely be considered worthy of the name 'God', the doctrine of the Trinity which establishes a perfect correspondence between who God is, what he knows, what he says, what he wants, and what he does, satisfies the conditions for the possibility of affirming that God is God: a being who always completely is what he is, which is to be and to know and to utter and to desire and to do all that is good.

Although the doctrine of the Trinity upholds the doctrine of the one God, it remains the case that human beings are incapable of knowing God directly apart from his own efforts to reveal himself, on account of the fundamental incommensurability of transcendent and immanent, simple and complex, infinite and finite, eternal and temporal, beings. By thus affirming that the immediate knowledge of God lies beyond our cognitive reach, I do not mean to suggest that we must abandon the task of thinking about who God is, or to deny that we can articulate a positive or cataphatic theology.

As I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, the unknowable nature of God simply stipulates that positive theological work be defined in terms of delineating what can be said about God for the sake of confirming that he is God, to wit, a being who by definition transcends human knowledge. Put differently, God's nature requires that claims about him be treated as formal rather than substantial, or indicative of the kind of being that he is, who as yet subsists beyond our ken, as opposed to disclosing him as an object that might be encountered and subjected to direct analysis in this life.

While such an appropriately reserved approach to the theological task allows us positively to articulate a great deal about God's nature, the apophatic or negative theological outlook that nonetheless underlies it prevents us from defeating the whole purpose of theology by describing God as though he were a being that could be rendered intelligible on our terms, that is, an idol.

In order to span the otherwise unbridgeable gap between humanity and God, the Incarnate Son of God revealed the kind of Being God is—indeed, Triune—by expressing his Spirit, which always operates out of a desire to make the Father known as the highest good and accomplish his purposes. In thus revealing the Trinity, the Son provided us with the fully delineated conception of the supremely transcendent or highest good, which we need in order to secure a rationale or motivation for

sustaining rationality. By adhering to the doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation, or to belief in the God of the Christian creed, thus engaging in what I call ‘Christian creedal reasoning’, consequently, we obtain the most robust account conceivable of the conditions that allow for the possibility of maintaining an orientation towards the highest good.^{xliv}

That is not to deny that it is possible to exercise rationality or moral virtue without the relevant rationale for rationality. As native speakers of a language can communicate relatively successfully without knowledge of grammar, so rational human beings may exercise moral virtue or strive for the highest good apart from belief in God. In much the same way that grammatical knowledge is essential to teaching a language or communicating in the most effective and articulate manner, however, a rationale for rationality is arguably constitutive of rationality, when rationality is defined in the fullest sense of the term.

From this, it follows that belief in the God of Christian faith not only allows us fully to account for rationality but also to be rational in the most robust sense. While a capacity to account for rationality by appealing to key articles of Christian faith naturally does not substitute for efforts to be rational, nevertheless the ability to be rational, combined with an explanation of the conditions for the possibility of rationality, guarantees human rationality in its paradigmatic form.

On my account in two subsequent chapters (‘Christian Creedal Reasoning’, parts I and II), the Son’s revelation of God in the form of a human person does not merely offer us the resources needed to explain and even sustain efforts to promote the highest good. It simultaneously establishes that our efforts to promote the highest good, facilitated by Christian creedal reasoning in light of belief in the Triune, Incarnate God, strictly speaking entail efforts to live by faith in the God of Christian creed. That is to say, they represent efforts to imitate the Son by using the abilities he bestowed on us through his creative work to express our human spirits to the Father’s glory, or in light of the knowledge of his absolute significance.

As this suggests, the process of becoming individuals that promote the highest good is one and the same as the process of growth as a Christian believer, at least if it is understood as such.^{xlv} This contention will be bolstered through a further discussion of other doctrines that are the subject of Christian creedal belief, in particular, creation, fall, redemption, and church. Towards the end of my discussion of these doctrines, I extrapolate the implications of my arguments thus far for an understanding of the relationship between Christianity and other systems of belief. Far from precluding conversations amongst members of diverse religious and moral traditions, I demonstrate that Christian creedal reasoning holds potential to facilitate them.

In developing the argument of the foregoing chapters, the next one (‘Sufficient Conditions for Theological Philosophy’) outlines the conditions which, when satisfied, ensure that we operate under the auspices of belief in the simple, Triune, and Incarnate God, such that our ordinary lives become convertible with our lives in God. These conditions are comprised of the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. On my account, the process of habituating ourselves in these virtues involves learning to bring the knowledge of God as the sole object of absolute significance to bear in knowing the immediate objects of our knowledge.

By organizing our lives around God along these lines, we are equipped to unlearn our natural tendency to ascribe greater significance to ordinary circumstances than they deserve and to prioritize greater over lesser goods, thus bearing things well at all times. Though we are unable to obtain knowledge of God himself in the process,

we do come to understand our experiences rather differently than we might have done otherwise. In much the same way that the grammar of a language helps us conceive the meaning of a sentence, consequently, belief in God provides us with the rules for thinking about reality, which enable us to put the world of our experience into proper perspective, without over or under-estimating the worth of the things we know.^{xlvi}

The difference belief in God makes to our understanding of the world in this instance is the sort of indirect knowledge of him that we may presently attain, through the mediation of the things which are directly accessible to our understanding. Provided we cultivate a habit of thinking about these things in terms of the fact that they are ‘not God’, we may begin indirectly to experience the God who is ‘nowhere’ in all the ordinary circumstances of our lives until we may eventually come to sense his presence continuously.

Though the theological virtues of faith and hope are the means through which we actually engage in such Christian creedal reasoning, I call attention in a further chapter (‘The Consequences of Theological Philosophy’) to the fact that the life of love alone furnishes proof of the orientation towards the highest good that such reasoning fosters. In developing this claim, I show how love creates the optimal conditions for cultivating the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, which are convertible on my account with the personal, inter-personal, instructive, and persuasive powers of Christian love.

On the grounds that rationality construed in terms of moral virtue—or love—constitutes the substance of a life in God, I further argue that a life of love, led on account of the rationale for rationality that faith in the Triune, Incarnate God provides, represents the final arbiter or proof of faith’s rationality. By this account, therefore, the rationality of Christian faith and even of particular doctrines like Trinity and Incarnation is established not as the articles or divine object of faith are somehow rendered intelligible on the terms of human reason, let alone any modern standard of reason, but as belief in God, Triune and Incarnate, motivates us to be rational, in the way I have defined rationality in terms of intellectual and ultimately moral virtue, culminating in an authentic life of Christian love.

As I will show in the course of this discussion, efforts to demonstrate love—and thus the theological and cardinal virtues—are bound to involve difficulties and sufferings of various kinds, particularly in a society permeated by the sin tendencies that undermine the virtues. In ways I will explain, the love of God makes it possible to bear these otherwise unbearable sufferings well. In that sense, the proof for the rationality of faith that the life of Christian love affords at once provides a theodicy, that is, a case for the goodness of God in the face of sufferings and evil. After all, it is the love of a fundamentally good and loving God that makes it possible in the first place to bring the good of bearing things well out of experiences that could not objectively be described as good.

In the concluding chapter (‘Towards a Trinitarian Philosophy’), I summarize the argument of the book. Subsequently, I explain how its efforts to overturn the question of faith’s rationality open doors for theological inquiries that are based on the assumption that faith is rational, including the inquiries concerning how to live by faith that are proper to the field of theological ethics. More specifically, I demonstrate how theological philosophy lays the foundation for what I call a Trinitarian philosophy, in which the affirmation of the Triune God that this work establishes as constitutive of the final rationale for human rationality is construed as the source and basis for all reality, human knowledge, and human life, which conversely represent modes of participation in the life of the Triune God.

As I have demonstrated, the account of the relationship between philosophy and theology that has been developed in this work and that such a Trinitarian philosophy would presuppose turns on the initial articulation of a pro-theology philosophy that defines rationality in terms of a personal commitment to the highest good, through engagement with all three of philosophy's sub-disciplines, namely, ontology, the theory of knowledge, and ultimately ethics. Since an appeal to belief in God, Triune and Incarnate, is required to explain and even maintain this commitment, or rationality, I have suggested that such a philosophy is strictly speaking a theological philosophy.

Although philosophy and theology are treated as distinct disciplines on this account, the fact that each informs and enables the purposes of the other suggests that a framework for understanding the inter-relationship of the two fields is necessary for the purpose of doing justice to the subject matter proper to each discipline, namely, human and spiritual life, respectively. This is the framework I begin to construct in the following chapters, which collectively delineate a pro-theology philosophy.